

Pittsburgh Steelers

Media Conference

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Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Arthur Smith

Weekday Press Conference



Q. What would you like to do better this week that you disappointment see last week. Where were some of the missteps?

ARTHUR SMITH: I think every week there is stuff you got to -- I mean, that's the whole -- it's really the name of the game is a better way to put it.

Whether you win, you score 40+ or whatever and have a big day, you got to keep that mindset to be objective. I say it over and over; it gets boring but it's the truth. Every game is a different story, how you have to adapt to what they're doing.

The game can change certainly situationally. Last week that first quarter we come out, don't hit the big play, start, don't convert the third down. That's usually what happens when you don't convert. Third down, it's going to be -- you got to convert; some of those drives, we didn't.

We were aggressive after the muff, but you could feel it. We were down seven points and they had that long drive and then I don't know how it felt to you guys, but it was dead and then all of a sudden TJ makes that play and then (snapping fingers) the game changes.

Next thing you know you're up 17-7 and that was a good team win. Turnovers came in bunches. I think our starting field position was plus-47, which is pretty rare. But as I said, every game is different. For the most part we took advantage of those opportunities.

But you talk about situational stuff. That's every week to finish games, the turnover and four minute and those things. It didn't cost us, but those are the things you're constantly working on things that come up.

Q. Halfway through this, played a handful of first place teams, playoff teams. Are you getting a good read competition-wise to where you guys think you need to be for the second half push here?

ARTHUR SMITH: There is some of that. It's what you -- you know, it's the AFC. We're not even at that point. We'll get there obviously playing our ninth game. Still, it's taken a couple years. Was used to talking about 16 games as the halfway point but now it's really nine is the turn.

It's going to change. I mean, way I always looked at it, whatever record, there is a pack of teams. There is couple teams at the bottom, couple teams right there, others in the middle. If you don't improve and evolve -- and things happen. I mean, one injury can change. You see that from a lot of teams. It's just focusing really right now Chargers.

They been a good team. They were a good team last year. It's a big opportunity Sunday night with another good defense and a good challenge for us. It's really about us improving and how we evolve.

Q. You mentioned you guys have targeted eight, nine pass catchers in games. What does it say about the unselfishness of this group that haven't heard a lot of complaints about lack of targets?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, that's the objective when you're winning. I think it's a credit to Aaron as well, the way he plays the game, and every quarterback is different. Doesn't make it better or worse. I think when guys understand that when like the opportunities and all the things, whether you may not be the primary, again, the coverage can dictate it or something can happen and gets off or off schedule.

You know, just going back to that game last week, early on couple things to get DK going. They were more so than they had all year first, second down trying to double him, so you don't -- that's why it's so important to adapt. You have the players, you talk about in between series, you always go into games with contingency plans. You're not waiting until halftime. You see it after the second drive and what their plan is.

You have things on the call sheet and you go over and have a conversation, and sometimes Aaron sees adjustments during the drive. Told the guys, hey, they're going to settle out the top and run. We are going to need

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to pick this ball up a little bit, and that happened certainly after TJ's turnover.

We were talking about that before we got ball on the short field and you saw us come out and pass it and there are things you can do to move him around, get him open. Then other guys got open as well. Aaron distributed the ball. Everybody got involved, we ultimately got the win.

Q. You mentioned the turnover and four minute. What are the conversations with a young player like Roman who is trying to make a play but that obviously can't happen at that point?

ARTHUR SMITH: Sure. Those are tough lessons learned and sometimes adversity can be your best teacher. I mean just going back to another young player, I'll take Darnell for example, early on, one of the early runs. Those are the small things -- you talk about the run game. Literally off the ball, got tripped up, we had the angles, cut it back, got a couple, you know, in the red zone, and you don't want guys to get down. And they're guys you trust and young players and they're all different.

You tell them and I told him, Darnell, coming back to you. Like we'll get going; get going. However the conversation was. I don't remember exactly. But that's a credit to Darnell. He made -- the catches he made as the game went on were way tougher than the ones he had the opportunity in the red zone. You don't give up on guys. That's trust and that's built. Same thing with Roman.

You know, nobody purposely tries to do that. Sometimes those are tough lessons learned. You can tell them, you drill things -- I mean ironically in Cincinnati he jumped. Didn't pay off. You're going to get burned. That's become like a new trend. I see it all over college football or whatever. Maybe Aaron and I are -- I don't feel it, but maybe we look at things old.

You just see that a lot. Sometimes guys get away with it and there is no reason it jump. I couldn't tell you why that trend started or whatever, but it did and it cost us there. We got a lot of faith in Roman. He's a tough minded guy. Like I said, adversity can be your best teacher.

Q. Were you trying to break him from that?

ARTHUR SMITH: Absolutely. You try break him from what happened in Cincinnati. I look at myself like, all right, I can say it. I don't just blame Roman. What are the things? We need to drill this and we need to -- you put up clips as you do every week situationally.

The other one that is trending in college football and the

NFL is guys dropping the ball at the one-yard line. Things you wouldn't even have thought about 15 years ago, but it happens and I've been a part of it.

And so you find different ways to teach and you got to find ways to continue to work the message. Ultimately everybody has got that shared accountability and responsibility for it.

Q. You've seen this receiver group now for eight games now. Is this going to be your group going forward? What do did you think the potential in the second half?

ARTHUR SMITH: I mean, it's really the entire group. You talk about -- you use what you got, and we got a lot of unique players in the tight end and running back position. I mean, Kenny and Jalen have been a big part of the passing game as well.

That's where you try problem solve and it helps. Like Aaron distributes the ball around and gets that ball out, and we're kind of unique in that way. So we just got to keep improving on that and every game plan will be a little different. Depending who we're playing.

Like I said, Chargers is a really good defense. They don't give up a lot of the cheap things. They're very disciplined. So we're looking forward to that challenge Sunday night.

Q. Art, my untrained eye looked at a 6'4" 206 pounder running and looked like he still had his speed. I got excited. How do you not get excited?

ARTHUR SMITH: I think you get excited for anybody that gets an opportunity. It's the one thing that I would say that I've enjoyed. There is more job opportunities now when they expanded the practice squad and you can out more vets on it. So a guy looking for a job gets an opportunity like other guys have, Ke'Shawn has. Going back to how things evolve, if an injury happens you've got to work the bottom of that roster however everybody gets in the door, even a guy that's got experience as a veteran. It allows you to the opportunity and they can get acclimated and the opportunity comes up, role will be created.

But I do value that. It helps a lot. Seeing a little more consistent play -- before that practice squad expanded I remember in 2014 towards the end of the year, we were signing guys on a Monday to play on Thursday night game that had to play.

You're trying to like -- talk about drinking from a fire hose trying to get these guys and they literally have to play this Thursday night.



So I think it's an opportunity. Gives you some consistency, roster flexibility, and certainly it's an opportunity for him.

Q. When it comes to Aaron, it seems like throughout the season he's shown more mobility. What are some areas in the offense that it's necessary to have quarterback mobility?

ARTHUR SMITH: It depends. It goes back to I've had a lot of different styles of quarterbacks. You know, not going to probably ask him to do some of things we did with Marcus or Fields. You know, I don't think you're going to see the quarterback power with him. Might be his favorite play. I don't think we're going to put that in.

But in all seriousness, you saw it a little bit in Cincinnati. What's naturally happening is you look around the league in third down, how many plays are converted off play extensions, even in the red zone when people play drop coverages sometimes if one is not there, a lot of big plays created, and Aaron has always been able to do that.

He certainly doesn't look his age when he's moving around.

Q. When I asked Aaron yesterday about the need to throw it to DK Metcalf because he's the No. 1 receiver, he kind of dismissed it entirely. You throw to the open guy. That's what offense is about and the NFL is about. Is there a freshness of how committed he is to working whatever scheme you -- concept you give him to find a soft spot in the defense, and is that a unique thing he brings?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, I just -- I don't know. It's hard for me to -- I've never been a comparison because I've had a lot of great players. That's just my personal philosophy. You lean into their strengths and obviously the way he sees the game and he's done it as well as anybody has playing that position, so obviously he gave you his opinion.

But other guys may have a different philosophy. Doesn't mean his is better or worse. That's what's so important, the time you spend with all the players and that position, why you spend so much time with them. He's been awesome.

Yeah, like you could ask other gold jacket type quarterbacks; may tell you something different. Doesn't mean that's better or worse. Clearly that's how he sees the game.

Q. As a coordinator to open up different parts of your playbook to know, hey, when I'm calling this condition

skeptical it's in the limiting to one part of the field.

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, sure. Like I said, if you really look at things, any offense I've coordinated, that's -- you talk about adapting. Once you get in, depending how your skill positions are built, certainly you're going to lean into different concepts and their strengths and the way they see the game. It probably goes back to the question of morale sometimes when guys know, hey, it's not going to be -- and it might be a game. Gets hot. You saw it happen a couple times this year.

Guys know that legitimately I don't look at the install and say, well, 99 percent I'm not getting the ball except for a couple crumbs here and there. Maybe the psychology of it and guys understand that ball can go anywhere.

Usually as a unit when morale picks up like that guys get excited. We got to continue that and ultimately win games and improve. That's what we try to do every week.

Q. You talked about being aggressive after the punt and that ends with a fourth down conversion. How has the increase in fourth downs changed the math and do you do more things differently on third down saying, hey, we'll go for it on fourth?

ARTHUR SMITH: Yeah, absolutely. Those are things that are talked about obviously, because it would -- I mean, it does change the mindset a little bit when you get in that kind of -- I mean, you see it a lot.

I think the one thing, that teams are really aggressive sometimes their third and longs are clearing the paint and checking it down and trying to get to fourth and two and three. And now you're seeing defenses adapt when they're playing soft zone and they may have one guy on the spy. Usually it's a tight end that chips or a back coming out to not let people get to the fourth and two.

But certainly when you get into third and medium, and we have converted a lot of runs -- I mean, that situation came up the other day. You know, the call ends, have an alert, didn't really get anything, so the decision changes.

So you have got to be -- try to anticipate that. Those are conversations that are talked about before and sometimes in-game.

If you get that -- you know, if you're a third and five and all of a sudden -- you know, then it's like, hey, go for it. Well, that would've changed your thought going into the third down call.

So it's all part of it.

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